



## Market and Trade Data

### Italians Have a Thirst for Beer

**By Dana Biasetti**

While Italy is known for its wines, beer is becoming more and more popular. In 2004, per capita wine consumption dropped to a record low of 50 liters. Beer still trails wines, but has reached 30 liters per capita. Between 1996 and 2005, Italy was the only European market where beer consumption consistently increased.

For example, in 2004 alone, Italy's beer imports rose 4.5 percent.

#### **Despite Increased Italian Production, Swelling Consumption Boosts Trade**

Large beer production plants, as well as microbreweries and brew pubs, are popping up throughout Italy. Currently, 19 beer plants employ more than 20,000 people. Although domestic production is up, it still does not meet growing demand. Therefore, imports are a necessity.

Italians steadily increasing beer consumption has stimulated the opening of new bars and nightclubs that attract a younger crowd that views beer as "approachable and trendy." For younger Italians interested in a healthy lifestyle, beer is perceived as a natural drink that promotes health and well-being and makes a good alternative to wine.

According to recent surveys, 43 percent of Italian men and 20 percent of Italian women drink beer regularly. These consumers tend to be young (18-24 years old) highly educated urban dwellers. For this demographic, not only is beer seen as a healthy choice, it has the advantage of being less expensive than wines. However, beer sales in Italy remain quite seasonal, with 50 percent of sales occurring in summer months.

Currently, Germany, the No. 1 beer producer in Europe, is Italy's top supplier, with the Netherlands, Denmark, the United Kingdom, and Belgium trailing far behind.

Premium, specialty, and imported beers are increasing their market share, and this trend is expected to continue. For example, premium lager brands manufactured in Italy find it difficult to compete with the huge range of the more than 900 imported brands.

***In Italy, more than 175,000 food and beverage outlets serve beer.***

#### **Outlet Overview**

Most Italians buy their beer in supermarkets and hypermarkets. These retail outlets account for 70 percent of all beer sales. Beer is distributed through hotels and restaurants by a network of 2000 wholesale companies. Beer sales are also doing quite well in the HRI (hotel, restaurant and institutional) sector, such as bars, nightclubs, pubs, and pizzerias. Overall, more than 175,000 Italian food and beverage outlets serve beer.

In addition, microbreweries and brew pubs are slowly popping up throughout Italy.

#### **HRI Sector Beckons**

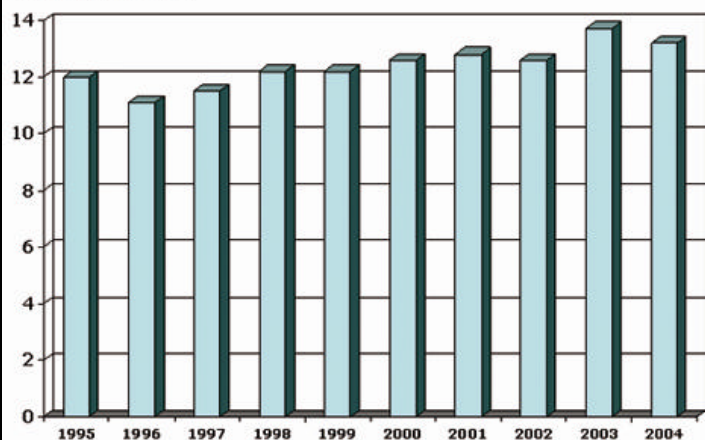
While European beers such as Heineken's and Beck's are prominent in Italy, there is room in the marketplace for U.S. brews from both large and small companies. Italian's beer tastes are sophisticated and are getting more so all the time.

U.S. craft brewers have strong market potential because they have learned to brew many different European-style beers. In short, there is an emerging beer culture in Italy and a growing interest in U.S. beers by both importers and consumers.

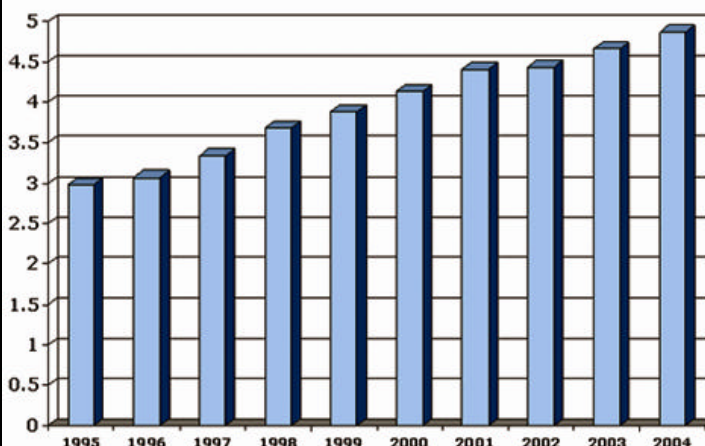
The HRI segment offers the best opportunity for exporting U.S. craft

### In Italy, Growing Beer Production and Imports Are Buoyed by Rising Consumption

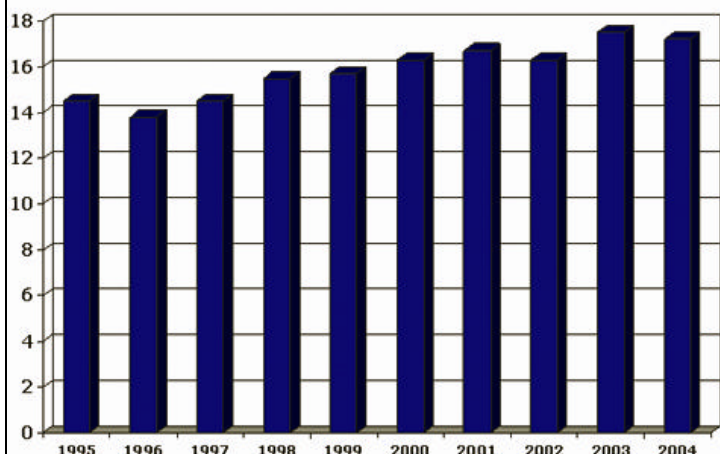
**Italian Beer Production**  
Million hectoliters



**Italian Beer Imports**  
Million hectoliters



**Italian Beer Consumption**  
Million hectoliters



beers. A cooperative effort on the part of U.S. craft beer brewers could offset the costs of selling and distributing small volumes. Draft beer holds keen interest for Italian importers.

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